# THE HOME CIRCLE

### The Star Spangled Banner.*

Oh, say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming;
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say, does that star spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave?

On that shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,
Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines in the stream!
'Tis the star spangled banner—oh, long may it wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

And where are the foes who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps' pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight or the gloom of the grave,
And the star spangled banner ir triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

Oh, thus be it ever when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation;
Bl[illegible] and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the Power that hath made and preserved us a nation!
Then conquer we must, when our cause it is just,
And this be our our motto, "In God is our trust;"
And the star spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave!

—Francis Scott Key.

---

Written for The Progressive Farmer.]

## Fishing.

Coming on to direct your mind to the superior sport of fishing—or, to employ the classical term, angling—you will think at first blush that it is an unreasonable topic for December. But that is not so, for two reasons:

First. Fishing may be done in winter almost as successfully as in summer, but of course not so pleasantly.

You may take a gourd of roaches to-day, even if snow lies on the ground and thin ice juts out from the banks, and go with them to a good pool and they will not last long. The trout are hungry as tigers. The cork will bob but briefly under the bait's excitement before down she goes, making her deepening way toward midstream, and the tug begins.

While this is so, yet fishing will never be a popular winter sport. It is too dreary. The naked reaches of cypress and gum, purple with the cold, and with but a few of their seeds left clinging in defiance of wind and birds; the creepy whisper of dry yellow rushes, when the wind goes through their beds, as if they wished to take up their aching feet from the water; the funeral stillness brooding everywhere, without a sapsucker's monosyllable or a squirrel's chatter to break it; the dread lest your foot may slip and you fall into the burning-cold water: all this is not enough to bar fishing as a December topic, but enough to bar it as a practice. Gunning is the thing for December, in the warm brown dry woods and affording movement enough to keep your blood up.

Second: The pine dreams of the palm. Poems have been written about winter visions of summer. When the rushes are dead and the swamps purple, it is a great luxury to imagine the shimmer of June heats, its shady places and the lisp of its leaves. So fishing, summer fishing, is a goodly thing to talk about in winter.

* * *

A shady stream that is crooked; a boat of some kind; a gourd of bait; a line and pole of the same length, fitted with jack-hook, jug-cork, and two buckshot,—and there is nothing else, except a square of tobacco, low water, and an early start, that any angler can desire. Human companionship is not necessary.

Just before the conquering sun gets his knee upon the eastern wall and begins to shower his arrows athwart the world, you seat yourself in the tail-end of your skiff and shove off. You make a bend and there, with mellow-bugs swimming upon it, shade all across it, a dark tract in the middle where the lily-pads give out,—there is your trout pool. Ah, it looks good! You drift past it on the opposite side and then cautiously turn your boat's nose across and upstream, stealthily making your way within casting distance.

You gather a handful of long lily-stems and sit on them as an anchor. You take a good chew of tobacco. You cast your eye about for copperheads. Thunder! What's the hurry? You have got all the time there is. There is plenty of time on the river.

You run your hand into the gourd and feel about among the terrified bait for a choice one. You bring him out, bristling and fluttering and sparkling like a jewel, and insert the hook toward the rear of his back fin, taking care not to break any of his ribs. If he keeps on fluttering and kicking you know he is not badly hurt.

* * *

And now you are getting down to the goody. Up goes the cane. The line being of a length with it, the bait is still in your hand. You fix your eye on the spot wherein to cast, give the cane that wrist movement, and here goes the roach, glistening through the air, and strikes, plook, right at the spot, making the mellow-bugs, the spiders, and the minnows scatter like Yankees. The game's afoot.

In actual life, you know, you may catch a fish and then again you may not. But the writer of this article would be at poor business if he, having the situation in his own hands, should send you home from this fancied expedition with nothing to show for it and with distressful excuses to wife or mother that the "wind wasn't right." You are going to catch a fish this time: be easy. And we are not going to let him break your hook or snap your line or tangle your tackle or jump over the side of your boat or tear out the hook-hold, and so escape. We have got the making of this fish and we are going to fix his predestination and make his calling sure. He may churn the pool into a foam so that bubbles will lie upon it for an hour, but he's just as good as on our imaginary dinner table right now.

* * *

But all this time while we are fixing the fate of the fish, your cork has been bobbing on the dark "hole," sometimes popping under and up again, sometimes lying quiet while the struggling bait lugs the lead up and thrusts his nose out at the surface. You watch these doings so narrowly that you will not look where you spit. Ducks may gossip among the reeds, squirrels may bark at you, a bluebird may tweedle across the stream with the very voice of summer, but they cannot woo your eyes from their place. There's a big fish down under that bait. If there were not a big one, the smaller fry would have snapped up the tempting morsel on sight. He is lying low and gradually, cautiously approaching, else the bait would not struggle so at the surface.

The buckshot are too heavy for the poor silverside. He must yield to their weight and let himself be carried down right into the teeth of the dragon.

* * *

Now be easy and hold your nerve, for the cork shook and has stopped its light dancing. Under she goes, slowly, slowly—not toward the lily-pod, bless your sweet soul, but toward the open stream. A little fellow would have run to cover with his catch and would have pulled the cork frantically toward shallow water. Nothing but the boss-trout carries it off with dignity and slow strength and into the darksome deeps. You know there's a tussel impending. You settle yourself well, and let him have his will. The cork is out of sight now, and the floating slack of the line is following it steadily and growing less and less. The slack has given out, and up the line and down the pole to your wrist comes the thrill of a sudden shock, a heavy halt. The pole bends to its work and the fun is on.

Holding a tight rein on him, you little by little slip your pole backward through your hands, with a view to getting a hold on the line and lead him in. Should you give him a moment's slack line or should you attempt to lift him, you would disturb our predestination and lose him in spite of fate. But it is presumed that you have sense and nerve.

Having grasped the line, hand over hand, you draw him toward you. From side to side it cuts hissing and whizzing through the water. You can see the fish now: his great white mouth gaping, his broad-finned tail sweeping the water with strength. Every bristle on him is up. There is nothing in him but fight. But the line is flax, the hook is stout, the angler wise. Foot by foot he comes, until, when within two feet of the skiff, with a splurge and a surge and a churning of bubbles, up you lift him into the boat,—and it's all over but the hollering.

JOHN CHARLES McNEILL.

---

*This is No. 9 of a series of Southern Poems selected especially for The Progressive Farmer and Cotton Plant by the Editor.

---

### Francis Scott Key.

Francis Scott Key, born in 1779, died in 1843, was a native of Maryland. During the war of 1812 he went under a flag of truce to the British fleet in Chesapeake Bay to ask the release of a friend. The admiral detained him with the fleet for two days to prevent his carrying ashore information. The British admiral had declared that he would soon compel the Americans to haul down the flag of Fort McHenry. During the night Key watched the flag anxiously until the bombardment ceased, some time before daylight. When he saw that our flag was "still there," his joy found vent in some hastily scribbled notes on the back of an old letter. He put them into verse while returning to Baltimore.—Selected.

---

### A Poultry Hint.

"Hallo, you look busy! What are you doing?" asked a man, represented in Moonshine as looking over the wall of his neighbor, a suburban gardener.

"Planting some of my seeds," said the owner of the garden, shoving his spade into the ground.

"It looks to me," said the neighbor, suspiciously eyeing an object on the ground, "as if you were planting one of my hens."

"Well, that's all right," replied the man with the spade. "The seeds are inside."

---

### The Wrong Way.

"You are an hour late this morning, Sam."

"Yes, sah; I know it, sah."

"Well, what excuse have you?"

"I was kicked by a mule on mah way here, sah."

"That ought not to have detained you an hour, Sam."

"Well, you see, boss, it wouldn't hab if he'd only hab kicked me in dis direction, but he kicked me de othah way!"—Yonkers Statesman.